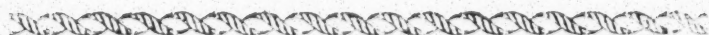


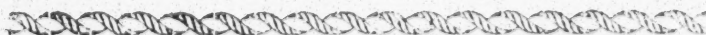
THOUGHTS

U P O N

GOD's SOVEREIGNTY.



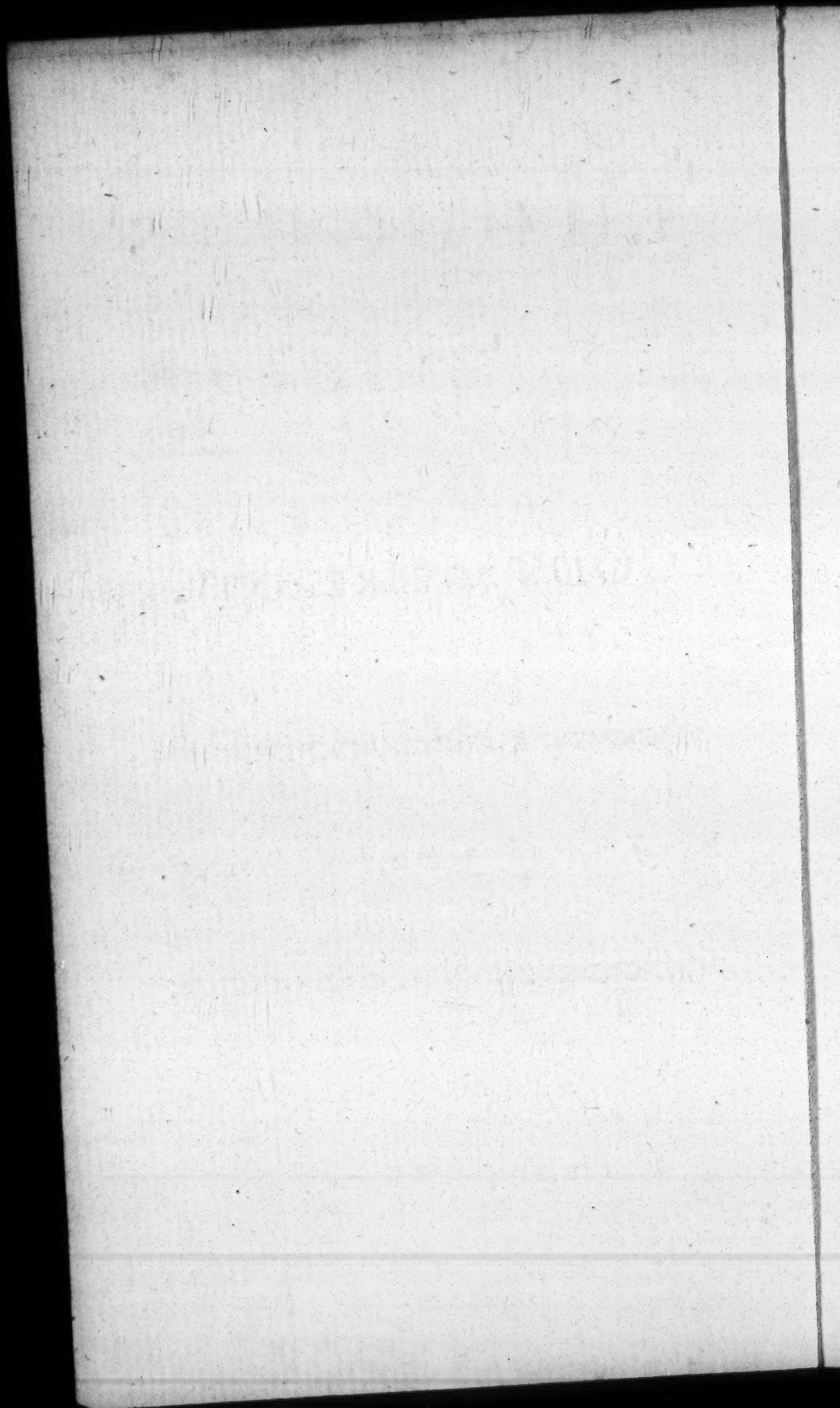
By *JOHN WESLEY*, A. M.



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THOUGHTS

U P O N

G O D ' s S O V E R E I G N T Y .



G O D reveals himself under a two-fold character; as a Creator, and as a Governor. These are no way inconsistent with each other: but they are totally different.

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As a Creator he has acted in all things, according to his own Sovereign Will. Justice has not, cannot have any place here ; for nothing is due to what has no being. Here therefore he may, in the most absolute sense, *do what he will with his own*. Accordingly he created the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein, in every conceivable respect, *according to his own good pleasure*.

1. He began his Creation, at what *time*, or rather at what part of Eternity it seemed him good. Had it pleased him, it might have been millions of years sooner, or millions of ages later. 2. He determined by his Sovereign Will the *duration* of the universe ; whether it should last seven thousand, or seven hundred thousand, or numberless millions of years. 3. By the same he appointed

pointed the *place* of the universe, in the immensity of space. 4. Of his Sovereign Will he determined the *number* of the stars, of all the component parts of the universe, and the *magnitude* of every atom, of every fixed star, every planet, and every comet. 5. As Sovereign he created the earth, with all the furniture of it, whether animate or inanimate; and gave to each, such a nature, with such properties. 6. Of his own good pleasure he made such a creature as *Man*, an embodied spirit, and in consequence of his spiritual nature, endued with understanding, will, and liberty. 7. He hath determined the *times* for every nation to come into being, with the bounds of their *habitation*. 8. He has allotted the time, the place, the circumstances, for the *birth* of each individual :

“ If of parents I came,
 “ That honour’d thy name,
 “ ’Twas thy goodness appointed it so.”

9. He has given to each a *body* as it pleased him, weak or strong, healthy or sickly. This implies, 10. That he gives them various degrees of *understanding*, and of *knowledge*, diversified by numberless circumstances. It is hard to say, how far this extends: what an amazing difference there is, as to the means of improvement, between one born and brought up in a pious *English* family, and one born and bred among the *Hottentots*. Only we are sure the difference cannot be so great, as to *necessitate* one to be good, or the other to be evil; to *force* one into everlasting glory, or the other into everlasting burnings. This
 cannot

cannot be, because it would suppose the character of God as a Creator, to interfere with God as a Governor : wherein, he does not, cannot possibly act, according to his own mere Sovereign Will ; but as he has expressly told us, according to the invariable rules both of Justice and Mercy.

Whether therefore we can account for it or no, (which indeed we cannot in a thousand cases) we must absolutely maintain, That God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. But he cannot *reward* the sun for shining, because the sun is not a free agent. Neither could he reward us, for letting our light shine before men, if we acted as necessarily as the sun. All Reward, as well as all Punishment, pre-supposes Free-Agency ;
and

and whatever creature is incapable of choice, is incapable of either one or the other.

Whenever therefore God acts as a Governor, as a Rewarder, or Punisher, he no longer acts as a mere Sovereign, by his own sole will and pleasure : but as an impartial Judge, guided in all things by invariable Justice.

Yet it is true, that in some cases, Mercy rejoices over Justice, (although Severity never does. God may *reward* more, but he will never *punish* more than strict Justice requires.) It may be allowed, that God acts as Sovereign, in convincing some souls of sin : arresting them in their mid career, by his resistless power. It seems also, that at the
moment

moment of our conversion, he acts irresistibly: there may likewise be many irresistible touches, during the course of our Christian warfare; with regard to which every believer may say,

“ In the time of my distress,
 “ Thou has my succour been,
 “ In my utter helplessness
 “ Restraining me from sin.”

But still, as St. Paul might have been either obedient or *disobedient to the heavenly vision*, so every individual may, after all that God has done, either improve his grace, or make it of none effect.

Whatever therefore it hath pleased
 God to do of his Sovereign Pleasure,
 as

as Creator of heaven and earth; and whatever his Mercy may do on particular occasions, over and above what Justice requires: the General Rule stands firm as the pillars of heaven, *The Judge of all the earth will do right.* He will *judge the world in righteousness*, and every man therein, according to the strictest Justice. He will punish no man, for doing any thing which he could not possibly avoid; neither for omitting any thing, which he could not possibly do. Every punishment supposes the offender might have avoided the offence for which he is punished. Otherwise to punish him would be palpably unjust, and inconsistent with the character of God our Governor.

Let then these two *Ideas*, of God the Creator, the Sovereign Creator, and
 God

God the Governor, the Just Governor, be always kept apart. Let us distinguish them from each other, with the utmost care. So shall we give God the full glory of his Sovereign Grace, without impeaching his inviolable Justice.

F I N I S.



On the 1st of June 1864
I received from Mr. J. H. Smith
a letter of introduction to
Mr. J. H. Smith, of the
U. S. Army, and I have
the honor to acknowledge
the receipt of the same.

21712

